

BHS A.S.S.I.S.T.

MAY NEWSLETTER

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May is Mental Health Month in America

For 65 years, Mental Health America has led the observance of *May is Mental Health Month* by reaching millions of people through media, local events and screenings. The BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. newsletter is dedicated to Mental Health Month during May.

The 2014 Mental Health Month theme is "Mind Your Health." The goals are to build public recognition about the importance of mental health to overall health and wellness; inform people of the ways that the mind and body interact with each other; and provide tips and tools for taking positive actions to project our mental health while promoting our whole health.



Mental disorders are common. An estimated 22% of Americans - about 1 in 5 - suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder in any given year. Recognition of the signs of mental health issues are important. BHS encourages you to visit both the [National Mental Health Association](#) and the [National Institute of Mental Health](#) websites for more information.

Coping with Everyday Problems: Tips for Reducing or Controlling Stress

If you are feeling stressed, there are steps you can take to feel better. As you read through the below suggestions, remember that conquering stress will take determination, persistence and time.

Be realistic:

If you feel overwhelmed by activities, learn to say no. Begin a "must do" list each night and eliminate the things that aren't as important.

Shed the superwoman(man) urge:

No one is perfect so don't expect perfection from yourself or others. Determine realistic deadlines and talk with your superiors.

Delegate:

Ask for help from friends, family, or co-workers as you deal with things that are overwhelming.

Find a support network:

Talking with others who are facing the same challenges can be very comforting, rewarding and in some cases has been known to improve one's health dramatically.

Take one thing at a time:

No one understands your needs or wishes better than you. Don't hesitate to ask the advice of others, but weigh what they have to say against your own values and beliefs. Ultimately, you should determine the path to take, but you need not make your decisions in isolation.

Consider counseling:

It's often beneficial to speak with a neutral third party, such as a professional counselor with expertise in helping navigate through life's challenges.

Remember that BHS can help you find a counselor to fit your needs. Call your BHS Care Coordinator today at 800-245-1150.

Healthy Diet: Eating with Health in Mind

You have probably heard the expression, “you are what you eat,” but what exactly does that mean? Simply put, food is fuel and the kinds of foods and drinks that you consume determine the types of nutrients in your system. These impact your mind and body!

Drinks

- **Avoid:** Sugary drinks and excessive amounts of caffeine. Sugary drinks have empty calories and damage tooth enamel. Caffeine dehydrates you. Even mild dehydration can cause fatigue, difficulty concentrating and mood changes.

Breakfast

- **Try to:** Incorporate a healthy breakfast into your routine. If you are tight on time, grab a whole grain granola bar, yogurt and a piece of fruit to get a good start to the day.

Lunch & Dinner

- **Avoid:** High-fat dairy, fried and refined/sugary foods, which provide little nutritional value. In addition to contributing to weight gain, a diet consisting primarily of these foods, significantly increases the risk of depression.



Tips for the Grocery Store

- Try to shop only on the perimeter of the store. It's where the foods have the most nutritional value.
- If your fresh vegetables tend to expire too quickly, frozen vegetables are a good substitute.
- Choose whole grain pastas, breads and cereals instead of those made with white flour. Whole grains are a good source of fiber, which promotes healthy digestion.
- Don't deny yourself of all your favorite foods. Most things eaten in moderation are fine from time to time.



**Chew
On
This**

“To insure good health: eat lightly, breathe deeply, live moderately, cultivate cheerfulness, and maintain an interest in life.”

-William Londen

Rest, Relaxation & Exercise

It can be hard to maintain a healthy lifestyle in the hustle and bustle world that we live in. If you are in school, commuting to work and/or taking care of your family, time can seem to evaporate. Taking good care of your body and mind can make a difference in how healthy you are and how well you cope with change.



REST

Getting the correct amount of quality sleep is essential to your ability to learn and process memories. Additionally, sleep helps restore your body's energy, repair muscle tissue and triggers the release of hormones that effect growth and appetite.

Just like exercise, the amount of sleep you need depends on your age. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute recommends at least 11-12 hours for preschool-aged children, 10 hours for school-aged children, 9-10 hours for teens and 7-8 hours for adults. If you feel as though you are not getting enough sleep on a regular basis and it is affecting your work or personal life, talk to BHS to discuss whether you may have an underlying issue affecting your sleep.

RELAXATION

While there are no specific guidelines for how much relaxation a person should incorporate into their lifestyle, making time to unwind and enjoy life is an important part of maintaining good health. Deep relaxation, like meditation, when practiced regularly not only relieves stress and anxiety, but also is shown to improve mood. Deep relaxation has many other potential benefits as well—it can decrease blood pressure, relieve pain, and improve your immune and cardiovascular systems.

If you aren't getting enough time to relax, you may find yourself feeling tense and stressed out. Long-term stress, if not addressed, can cause a host of health issues, including chest pain, headaches, digestive issues, anxiety, depression, changes in sexual desire and the ability to focus.

EXERCISE

Getting the appropriate amount of exercise benefits nearly all aspects of a person's health. Not only does exercise help control weight, it also improves mental health, mood, chances of living longer, and the strength of your bones and muscles.

Adults ages 18 and over (including older adults) need at least 2½ hours of moderate aerobic activity each week and muscle strengthening exercises twice a week. Children and adolescents need an hour of physical activity every day, with vigorous activity at least 3 days each week. They also need muscle and bone strengthening exercises at least 3 days of the week.

Not getting enough exercise puts you at increased risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, high blood pressure and some cancers.

Finding Help: When to Get it & Where to Go

Mental health disorders are real, common and treatable. The following are signs that your loved one may want to speak to a mental health professional.

In Adults:

- Confused thinking
- Prolonged depression (sadness or irritability)
- Feelings of extreme highs and lows
- Excessive fears, worries and anxieties
- Social withdrawal
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Strong feelings of anger
- Growing inability to cope with daily problems/activities
- Suicidal thoughts
- Substance abuse

In Adolescents & Young Adults:

- Substance abuse
- Inability to cope with problems and daily activities
- Changes in sleeping and/or eating habits
- Defiance of authority, theft, and/or vandalism
- Intense fear of weight gain



- Prolonged negative mood
- Frequent outbursts of anger

In Younger Children & Pre-Adolescents:

- Changes in school performance
- Poor grades despite strong efforts
- Excessive worry or anxiety (i.e. refusing to go to bed or school)
- Hyperactivity
- Persistent disobedience or aggression
- Unusually frequent and intense tantrums

YOU CALLED...NOW WHAT?

Spend time talking with your BHS Care Coordinator; you can ask for mental health providers in your area who match your desired demographics and/or beliefs, discuss your benefit plan and how to make an appointment.

Once you are at your visit, the therapist or doctor will want to get to know you and why you came to visit him or her. The therapist will want to know—what you think the problem is; about your life; what you do; where you live and with whom you live. It is also common to be asked about your family and friends. This information helps the professional to assess your situation and develop a plan for treatment.

As you progress through the therapeutic process, you should begin to feel gradual relief from your distress, to develop self-assurance and have a greater ability to make decisions and increased comfort in your relationship with others. Therapy may be hard at times, but episodes of discomfort occur during the most successful therapy sessions. Mental health treatment should help you cope with your feelings more effectively.

BHS is always here to help. Call us today if you need to discuss a specific issue that you may need help with.